THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

connections

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

Every Teacher Project Supports LGBTQ - Inclusion

On January 15, 2016, the Final Report of the Every Teacher Project was launched at Convocation Hall, University of Winnipeg.

Photo submitted by The Manitoba Teachers' Society

Dr. Catherine Taylor and her research team, including MHRC Board Member Dr. Donn Short (back row, third from right) celebrate the launch of the Final Report of the Every Teacher Project.

The report on LGBTQ-inclusive Education in Canada's K-12 Schools is the product of a comprehensive research project supported by The Manitoba Teachers' Society and every national, provincial and territorial teacher organization in the publicly funded school systems of Canada. A team of researchers, including the Commission's own Board member, Donn Short, reached out to approximately 3400 participants, making this the largest study of its kind to date worldwide.

What is clear from the report is that the vast majority of teachers approve of LGBTQ-inclusive education and although teachers in Catholic schools are only slightly less likely to approve, they are much less likely to practice, LGBTQ-inclusive education. Among the main reasons given for not teaching in LGBTQ-inclusive ways were lack of leadership and resources.

What is also clear is that while almost all rated their school as safe, far fewer rated their school as safe for LGB or transgender students.

Representatives from the Board of Commissioners and MHRC staff were proud to celebrate with the community the release of this valuable piece of research and will be looking for ways to continue to support LGBTQ education as a means of promoting the human rights of all students in Manitoba schools.

Haven't had an opportunity to read the full report yet? Find the full report at:

http://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Every-Teacher-Project-Final-Report-WEB.pdf

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan – A/Executive Director & Counsel

The New Year always brings with it renewed commitments and the opportunity for change. Following the release of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the recent focus on discrimination based on race, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has been hard at work developing a multi-year focus project aimed at both identifying systemic barriers in the complaint process and ways to improve our education programs.

The first phase of the project will involve consultation with Indigenous communities in Manitoba. Efforts are already underway to establish an advisory council, which will include Elders, to ensure our approach to the public consultations is thoughtful but also focused on concrete outcomes related to our complaint process and education programs. With the advice and expertise of the Advisory Council, the MHRC anticipates that it will begin its conversations with Indigenous communities later this spring.

Most recently, an e-questionnaire was sent out this month to almost 500 people, for whom we had email addresses on file, who have participated in various stages of our complaint process. Thank you to everyone who has already completed the questionnaire. This will give the Commission valuable information which will help us evaluate our processes and address systemic barriers related to race, disability or other characteristics.

We will be compiling the results of the e-questionnaire in February and will continue to report on the Focus Project as much as possible along the way.

The next Connections Bulletin will be released in April, following the provincial election.

AYO Hosts First of 13 Fires

Human Rights are happening in Manitoba whether you call it 13 Fires Conversations, Manitoba for Human Rights or Summit of Inclusion. Winnipeggers' human rights awareness is being raised all across the city.

Organized by the Aboriginal Youth Organization (AYO) the event was well attended with people from a cross section of our community. The diversity included age, race, sex, sexual orientation, religious beliefs ethnicities, social class etc. and each was given the respect inherent in human rights, to voice their concerns.

AYO held its first summit on September 17, 2015, with the goal of hearing from a diverse group of voices about racial inclusion and to facilitate the participation of all who attended – including First Nations, Chinese, Muslim, Caucasian, Filipinos and the Métis communities. Each issue raised by this group was named "a fire" and hence the 13 Fires. Each fire will be the conversation topic at each event throughout the year.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Outreach Officer attended the first of the 13 Fires or conversations held on December 13, 2015 at the Thunder Bird House. The large group was broken down in smaller groups each of which tackled a different topic – from human rights for children to environmental issues. These groups reported to the plenary. The formal presentation was followed by food and networking. The next fire is slated for January 23rd 2016.

Community members participate in the first of AYO's 13 fires.

York University: Mental Health Diagnosis Are Not Required for Accommodations

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) recently announced that it has worked with complainant Navi Dhanota, represented by ARCH Disability Law Centre and York University (York) to develop new documentation guidelines to access academic accommodations. The change in guidelines means that students will no longer have to disclose their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) diagnosis to obtain mental health accommodations and supports.

Navi Dhanota is a Ph.D student in Critical Disability Studies at York. When she first attended another Ontario university, she was required to disclose her DSM diagnosis in order to have her needs accommodated. When she transferred to York, she was again asked to disclose a DSM diagnosis to get accommodation. The issue of accommodation is important to Ms. Dhanota and she wanted to ensure that she and other students would not be required by the university to disclose their DSM diagnosis in the future. As a result she made a complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

During this time, a provincially funded report by researchers at Queen's University and St. Lawrence College entitled Recommendations for Documentation Standards and Guidelines for Post-Secondary Students with Mental Health Disabilities (Academic Accommodations Project) was also released. The OHRC intervened in Ms. Dhanota's case relying on its Policy on preventing discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions.

Ms. Dhanota, ARCH Disability Law Centre, York and the OHRC worked collaboratively to develop revised Guidelines. The revisions address potential barriers experienced by students with mental health disabilities while still ensuring that the University gets appropriate medical documentation to help determine academic accommodations (http://mhds.info.yorku.ca/registration/).

Under The Human Rights Code in Manitoba, all educational facilities have a duty to provide accommodation to the point of undue hardship for students with needs relating to their protected characteristics, including disability. Students requesting accommodation should be prepared to provide documentation to support their disability-related needs. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission encourages schools, employers, and service-providers to avoid requesting a medical diagnosis, but instead to focus on the impact of the disability and the individual's required needs.

The MHRC, by demand, is returning to Thompson to delivery a full day of training - Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace - on Tuesday, February 9, 2016.

To register and for complete details, please email hrc@gov.mb.ca or call 204 726-6262.